

TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH HINES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN ACTION

IN SUPPORT OF:
H.B. No. 5208 - AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR JUSTICE-IMPACTED PERSONS
FEBRUARY 28, 2022

My name is Elizabeth Hines, and I am the Executive Director for **Community Partners in Action (CPA)**, an agency that has operated continuously in Connecticut for over 146 years. CPA provides a myriad of services to people involved in CT's juvenile and criminal justice systems and we strongly support justice reform and evidence-based practices in such systems.

CPA's historical commitment to ensuring our participants have the right to work; the right to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing, and **housing**; the right to physical and mental health services; the right to a healthy environment and the right to education has never wavered since our incorporation in 1875. We guarantee these rights are afforded to our participants via our various programming options.

CPA is a longtime partner with the CT Department of Correction (DOC) and Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the CT Judicial Branch. We operate a DOC Work Release Program in Hartford, CSSD Transitional Housing in Hartford and Waterbury, and CSSD Alternative in the Community Programs in Hartford, Manchester and Waterbury. In addition, CPA operates the Resettlement Program and Prison Arts Program and is **the lead agency for the Hartford and Waterbury Reentry Welcome Centers, which opened their doors in September 2018 and December 2021 respectively.**

Our staff are on the front line of reentry and have observed the significant challenges people face when they discharge from prison into homelessness. They face the additional challenge of being rejected from private, public, and subsidized housing based solely on their criminal record. Landlords, property managers, and housing agencies use tenant screening and selection policies to issue blanket denials to individuals with criminal records. This is a misguided approach because studies have shown that **criminal history is a poor predictor of tenancy outcomes**. Criminal histories alone do not indicate the highest risk of re-offense.

This kind of **discrimination** continues to punish people with a record long after they have served their time. **This is not only unfair, but unsafe**. Research has shown that having **stable housing reduces the risk of recidivism and enhances public safety**.

Community Partners in Action strongly endorses H.B. No. 5208. This will prevent landlords from issuing blanket denials of applicants with criminal records. It will require landlords to conduct individualized assessments that take into account factors such as time since the conviction, age at the time of the offense, and any evidence of mitigating circumstances such as employment and rehabilitation.

Community Partners in Action believes housing is not only a basic human need it is a basic human right.